POLITICAL COMMS.

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2. "If you turn out to be a good minister, make sure everyone knows about it. Only the press, television and radio can tell them. There is no message without the media." (Gerald Kaufman MP) In what ways do the media 'mediate' between the government and the electorate.

PUBLIC SPHERE

* Important "what do we understand by mediate"
→ 'mediate' must also be objective = democracy.

(1). At the on onset, the media can be placed within Habermas' definition of the 'public sphere'.

Placed within the context of that definition, the media becomes an important forum for discussion. of issues, it provides the electorate ~~or whether they are within the~~ with

(i) a 'rapport' as to whether the policies they voted for are being implemented

(ii) a field where they can be made aware of ~~the~~ important implementations that could have important repercussions upon their lives as citizens or as individuals

This has been the particular case of the GM food crisis.

It is possible to argue for example that the media, especially the Press, was responsible for turning the debate into an issue.

Of course, the importance of activist groups like friends of the Earth ~~are~~ we much more engaged forms of communicating the possible ~~GM fo~~ dangers of GM food.

However, the ~~channell~~ channel of the Press / Media in general is important in letting the citizens in on the abuses of power & their rights as citizen within those issues – like speaking against them.

To get back to our argument, within particular contexts like those, the media 'mediate' ~~by providing~~ between government and electorate by lifting the veil on government proceedings which the public would otherwise ~~not~~ have limited access to

~~within this role,~~

However, as can be seen this role is more the simple mediation. It is also an active role of arousing public ~~awareness~~ opinion. Within this role, the media are a watchdog as well a simple ~~neutral~~ arena of communication as understood by Habermass notion of the public sphere.

DAY 2

PLAN.

MEDIA. - mediation.

① **DEFINING mediation or political communications.**

- HAVING DEFINED, we may move on to. looking at various ways in which different types of media, act as communicators within particular contexts.

UK:- **COVERING PARLIAMENT.** [NEWSTORY]

② Media: In case of press - mediate by bringing up particular elements of parliamentary proceedings. and organising them into a newsstory which is accessible to the public.

In effect this role requires digesting important political debates down to stories that can be followed by the wider public.

The role of the press / media within that context is that of an interpreter - a translator

A no of practices illustrate how this is carried out :-

GOVT / MEDIA COMPLICITY or MANIPULATION of MEDIA

③. The nature of certain ~~this~~ Government / Media relations seem to question whether the media simply act as communicators or whether they do not represent the outlets if not the accomplices of certain strategies devised within a more elaborate structure

↓

Two instances of those relations. ~~characterise~~ shed new light on the matter.

(1) The nature of **Lobbying** - as dependent on particular relationship between journalist & source

(2) The phenomenon of **Spin** where the media provide an outlet for the Spin-doctor to promote his/her candidate.

↓

focus esp on Mandelson = described by Jones as having the art of knowing the motives of political reporters + knowing the internal mechanism of Press & broadcast media :-

The Art of Manipulation. This raises questions as to whether it is really the media who mediate.

put the media in a position

(4) Certain instances ~~n~~ to provide a very neutral and direct channel of communication between Govt and Electorate.

This is the case of the publication of **PRESS RELEASE** whereby particular documents ~~are~~ ~~to~~ on current affairs are compiled ~~& released~~. by Press ~~officers~~ secretaries (Joy Johnson) within ~~the~~ govt. bureaus and ~~handed out~~ released for publication.

↓

Such a process allows the media very little role as an investigative force and certainly does not put it in the position of getting the public interest across to ~~the~~ the treatment of particular issues.

The press release

~~It could be~~ and ~~what is~~ a variant that have appeared recently: the video release, seem to relate more to primary, we will refrain from saying primitive, relations between ~~the~~ media and govt. The media becomes a govt. regulated outlet for disseminating selected information. This particular ~~relationship~~ position of the media can be related to the use of glasnost by the Soviet

~~Duma~~ Duma :- described by (. . . .) -
where the media is ~~propag~~ an extended mouthpiece of the State and a potential tool for propaganda -.

On Spin :- Jones :-

- information is culled from spin doctors.
  - [pp. 123 - indicates that journalists refer to them as 'authoritative sources' to interpret speeches & proceedings."

- 'most manipulative conversations take place in private." — p 123.

- "The establishment of "a coterie of trusted reporters and other contacts." — p 123.

INVESTIGATIVE REPORTING - Active journalism

There are also instances where more than simply mediate, the ~~Press~~ Media become active as ~~&~~ in questionning how political activities are organised.

~~Within~~ This role of the press is crucial in ~~establishing~~ the relationship of communication that is said to exist between Government and electorate. For it allows issues of public interest to be brought forward in an engaged discussions with representatives of the govt. The media can thus ~~to~~ be said to provide a voice for the public in matters of decision making.

This is of course not a flawless perspective. if one considers the heterogeneity of the wider public, it is possible to question the relevance as to whose 'public interest' actually gets through to ~~the~~ being dealt with in the media.

However, it is a matter to be considered that the media provide at the same time a forum for questionning politicians and a body of journalists who can on behalf of at least a portion of the electorate question the Government on how things are being implemented.

Such a role of the media has been deemed essential within the context of the 'public sphere' (Habermas 1964). McNair (1999) will describe this role as being particularly important within liberal democratic theory (McNair, 1999: 50). He quotes Scannell and Cardiff (1991) in stating that within that respect, the role of the BBC was to create:

"... an informed and reasonable reasoning public opinion as an essential part of the political process in a mass democratic society."

(Scannell and Cardiff, 1991: 8).

McNair (1999) states that through the history of the media, ~~the Press~~ objectivity was relatively kept in the early years of the Press and those of broadcasting. He will thus state that:

"The democratic principle was preserved in so far as newspapers and periodicals expressed a plurality of opinions, corresponding to the variety of opinions circulating in the public sphere."

(McNair 1999: 51).

~~The~~ The importance of this legacy of objectivity and exercise of the democratic principle is essential in the ~~to~~ function accomplished by the Media in ~~con~~ putting the electorate in communication w/ the ~~people~~ Govt.

INTERPRETATION + AGENDA SETTING.

Indeed, Mc Nair (1999) draws importance on the fact that the media have become the principal source for voters to evaluate governments. This is largely put on the account of the fact that there is a marked inaccessibility between the population and the dealings at the House of Commons & 10 Downing Street.

Mc Nair (1999) suggests:

"The Press and Broadcasting have become the principal means of "mediating", that is, standing between people and the world and reporting to them what they could not see or experience themselves."

(Nimmo and Combs, 1983: 12) quoted in (McNair, 1999: 51)

In other words, we are here set to read the media as setting the agenda, as placing the onus on important issues, providing a narrative for the electorate to make sense of political reality.

Media as informing public understanding or agenda-setting

One very important in which the media have been seen to mediate between government and public is by providing executing ~~exercising~~ a progress of translation of political issues in a way that helps the general public to make sense of the ~~the~~ very abstract issues at play within political debates. etc... (amendments to particular clauses, implementation of particular policies).

Here again, several factors intervene, and several views opine forcing us to ~~focus~~ look at a variety of instances of how the media articulate ~~behave~~ information bet Govt and the electorate:

1) agenda-setting - Blumler etc.
2) new - STORIES - McNair.

PRESS RELEASE] - Include in 1st part of essay

On numerous occasions during its 'mandat', the Govt. is required to communicate to the electorate about the development of ~~info~~ current affairs and policies.

The media within this context become a simple ~~channel of~~ outlet where these information is released. (I am here divorcing the process from the real context, for every press release would be automatically ~~or~~ accompanied by a horizon of analyses, evaluations and critiques). However being an outlet ~~for press releases make the media (The Press)~~ is one of of the roles which can be considered as a single element

Also include the element of general political comment.

- This body of constitutes perhaps the most trivial form of political communication within the 'public sphere' view of the media's role as vanguard of democracy. It is however the most popular form of ~~media~~ Press coverage, intervening during those gaps when no major political events happen. ~~These the~~

Such a phenomenon is important to consider within the context of how the media mitrate opinion formation through simple features or tabloid stories that the ~~people~~ are easily accessible to the ~~ge~~ electorate at large. ~~Th~~ For indeed we will now see how the way these stories are structure present very simplistic criteria for evaluating politicians: popularity, image, sleazines etc...

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Features, Gossips and Stories

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~~they are a mixed~~

So at the onset, one can argue that within those contexts, the media, particularly the Press mediate politics ~~as~~ and transport & the Government within the cognitive spheres of people's daily activities.
(e.g: The Sun, TV:- The 11 o'clock Show (Channel 4's) seems to be a television version of the tabloid, as well as game shows like Have I got news for you).

~~A number of practices help to inform~~

Although the format of this type of political communication is very different from the high-brow ~~coo~~ political reporting of broadsheets, similar processes help in gathering information.

The influence of the Spin-doctor in creating an image is very palpable. ~~E~~ Jones (1995) will argue that Mandelson would orient a lot of effort towards acquiring positive coverage by 'The Sun'

'Some critics have distinguished between 'benign' and 'malign' manipulations of the media.

...sionals, for example, usually refer to ...es to explain why ... presidents and prime ...s get more attention than miners or garbage collectors."

— (Blumler & Gurevitch, 1995 : 46).

The Blumler & Gurevitch have analyzed this phenomenon within the ~~structure~~ context of news values. What they observe is that many media professionals ~~do make assumption~~ will often reshape information, and articulate them in the aim of making them interesting for their public / audience

AGENDA:- needs to be addressed to understand whether more and more, the electorate is not being neglected for other relationships

Blumler and Gurevitch (1995). have ~~the~~ approached agenda setting within the Press ~~of history~~ ~~a link between with relationships that develop between~~.

They have exposed the various themes which are upheld as explanations of the phenomenon. ~~Some Theories would argue that:-~~ They would indicate for example that:

"Media professionals, for example, usually refer to news values to explain why ... presidents and prime ministers get more attention than miners or garbage collectors."

– (Blumler & Gur., 1995: 46).

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B and GL(1995) will quote a ~~radio~~ newsman at a local station who will declare about the audience:

"They're not interested unless it is something that affects them. The example I would give here is the Budget; because taxes effect them - taxes on cigarettes, sweets and drink. But the general run of parliamentary business is of no relevance to them."

(B + G (1995: ~~53~~ 53)

Within this context, we can see that the media will often set the news-agenda to fit what is assumed to be the interest of the general public - the electorate.

Within this context one can argue whether the media do more than mediate between Government and electorate. One is tempted to ask whether they do not initiate a whole news-agenda of their own thereby ~~seducing the electorate~~ imposing their views as preferences to the wider public.

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Indeed Blumler and Gurevitch (1995) would contest that the media always orient their message towards ~~the benefit of the~~ better information of the electorate, their ~~offer~~ inference on the matter seems ~~to~~ rather to indicate a process of disinformation:.

"We therefore contend that journalists react to all social groups and institutions, not only via news-value criteria, but also according to the degree of respect (or lack of it) to which they are regarded as entitled by the dominant value system."

- (Blumler & Gure., 1995:55).

We can thus see, that far from ~~the~~ simply 'mediating' between Government and Media, there are instances where the media have been noted to promote their own agenda on politics to the public. We could thus argue that the media can disinform rather than mediate, can ~~re~~ remanipulate the message ~~in unjustified ways~~ from Government to electorate ~~in some~~ through the questionnale ~~ways~~ imposition of their own news-value system.

This is incidentally what Blumler and Gurevitch (1995) would call a 'sacerdotal' treatment of the electorate by the British Media (p55)

TELEVISION AGENDA

Blumler and Gurevitch (1995) have also appraised and analysed the consequences of the establishment of Television news agenda.

Curran (1991) has for his part analysed how pressures exerted on the media can define agendas and significantly impact on ~~the~~ the notion of public interest

Curran proceeds by ~~esta~~ establishing that classical liberal theory articulates the public sphere as

" the space between government and society in which private individuals exercise formal and informal control over the state: formal control through the pressure of public opinion."

-(Curran 1991: p 29)

He then proceeds to to determine how "power exercised through (capitalist and patriarchal structures" ~~have~~ (p 29) have created a situation where :

"... interests have become organised and collectivised"

- (Curran 1991; 29)

Curran (1991) would thus argue that the existence of such pressures demythify the public sphere argument.

He will thus challenge the Liberal democratic approach with the radical democratic approach. The latter give an opinion that ~~the media~~:

"The media are a battleground ~~of~~ between contending forces. How they respond to and mediate this conflict affects the balance of social forces and, ultimately, the distribution of rewards in society."

—(Curran (991 : 29).

These two contrasting approaches have been noted by Curran to have originated:

"... different normative judgements about the practice of journalism." (p. 32)

Blumler and Gurevitch - (concluding chapter):-

Blumler and Gurevitch's conclusions ~~are~~ castigate many aspects of the ~~media~~ Government-media-electorate relationship.

Blumler & Gurevitch (1995) indicate that the professionalisation of the media - as well as Government Communication techniques have created a system which defeat public interest:-

"... professionalization is the antithesis of amateurism. Waging publicity competition through the media, managing journalists' news values, putting the best spin possible ~~to stories~~ on significant stories, fashioning political advertising, designing opinion polls and interpreting their results - all ~~these~~ these require the skills of experts, who are single-mindedly dedicated to the goal of victory in such competition, and for whom all other goals, ~~including~~ including policy and politically educative ones, are subordinate if not irrelevant.

(Blumler & Gurevitch, 1995: 207.

MARKETING (BLUM & GUREVITCH)

~~As another contribution, possi~~

He also castigates the insurgency of political marketing and advertising. ~~professionalization~~

"professionalization has revamped the concept of electioneering, assimilating it to a process of political marketing. This treats the voter more as a consumer to be wooed than as a citizen to be enlightened or engaged in ~~deb~~ debate."

— (Blum & Gur, 1995 : 208).

"The marketing approach tends to militate against broad based discussions of public concerns during elections and drives a deeper wedge between policy-oriented Statesmanship and electorally oriented appeasement of voters."

He argues than an example of this is the reformulation of political appearance as performance.

✓✓ "Much of this is now taken for granted as commonplace - e.g: argument events through ~~cri~~ crisp, punchy, and arresting soundbites

and the staging of political events with high visual or symbolic appeal."

— (Blumler & Gurevitch:- 208).

Blumler and Gurevitch also outline particular agenda-wars between journalists and MP's (Gaut) as having a detrimental effect on the side of the electorate:-

"Most telling ... may be journalists' practices of 'disdaining' political and especially campaign news, ~~news~~ covering events in a manner designed to demonstrate the reporter's distance from their propagandistic purposes, ~~indicating that~~ indicating that the event has been contrived, describing how it has been crafted and presenting it as a public relations effort to be taken with a grain of salt."

~~p 210~~

(Blumler & Gurevitch, 1995: 210).

For indeed, ~~when~~ if political information becomes a dubious source, then the electorate far from being empowered to make rational choices for him/herself rather faces no other options than to choose between different ways of being manipulated: either by the Government or by the media.